

Book reviews

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and VD. By R D Catterall, 1982. Family Doctor Publications, British Medical Association, London. Pp 30. Price: £0.50.

This booklet, produced by the British Medical Association, is certainly a most complete guide to the sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Indeed it would be useful reading for medical students and even medical practitioners working with young people. It is, however, going to be largely wasted on the group most at risk from these diseases, namely adolescents and young adults.

The general format is drab with a tendency for unnecessary repetition. Infections are dealt with not only individually but also as they might present. A problem-orientated approach, which stresses the possibility of asymptomatic infection, is probably more helpful to the teenager reading such a booklet. The

section on signs and symptoms should therefore have been expanded with more detailed information on the specific infections described later.

Although well written the language used is extremely complex with a Haverling Index of over 15. This equates with the reading age of a bright grammar school pupil and would deter the average reader from completing the booklet, which is unfortunate as sections at the end entitled "The STD clinics," "Questions you ask," and "Ten points you should know" are useful. The non-medical reader will be confused by the use of technical terms without sufficient explanation, such as "intra-uterine device," "septicaemia," "penicillin sensitivity," and "catheter." A note of the colloquial terms for the venereal infections, parts of the anatomy, and symptoms would have been more valuable.

A text aimed at health education should

be accompanied by clear simple drawings and diagrams to illustrate the concepts described. The drawings in this booklet are of couples kissing, cuddling, drinking, or going to a clinic. They are irrelevant and therefore valueless. Simple drawings of the genitalia, showing how the fallopian tubes might become blocked or what a "sore" looks like, would have greatly enhanced the text.

In conclusion this booklet will be useful to a comparatively small group of school teachers and paramedics concerned in health education and possibly to intelligent worried parents. It will be of little value to the young at risk and regrettably cannot be recommended to the average clinic attender requesting further information.

I should like to gratefully acknowledge the help of Mr Ian Fairfax (Area Health Education Officer, Newcastle Health Authority) for his advice while preparing this review.

R S Pattman

Treponemal infections: Report of a WHO Scientific Group. WHO Technical Report Series No 674. 1982. WHO, Geneva (available at HMSO, London). Pp 75. Sw frs 9.

In 1978 the World Health Assembly requested the director general of the World Health Organisation to draw up, disseminate, and update as required guidelines on the control of sexually transmitted diseases. This excellent report was accordingly produced following a convention of the WHO Scientific Group on Treponemal Infections in 1980.

The book deals in a logical sequence with the epidemiology, clinical aspects,

diagnosis, management, control, and research aspects of syphilis and the non-venereal treponematoses outlining changes within the past 10-20 years. An admirable balance is achieved between the management of syphilis in developed countries with their resources for diagnosis, follow-up, and contact tracing and that in the developing countries where these facilities are often not available. Clear and unequivocal recommendations are made throughout the book with particularly useful guidelines on the treatment of the various types and stages of treponemal infection. These are all concisely summarised at the end in a most practical fashion. The penultimate chapter provides

a useful synopsis on research aspects, and the section entitled "New parameters for the diagnosis of neurosyphilis by cerebrospinal fluid examination" is especially valuable, meriting further investigation. The information on immunity, however, is scanty considering the amount of current research in this field.

This impressive volume should be read by all clinicians, laboratory workers, and public health administrators in any way concerned with treponemal infection. At the modest price of £2.10 there is no reason why it should not be readily available.

R S Pattman

Notice

In recognition of his lifetime contribution to the field of sexually transmitted diseases Dr R D Catterall has been awarded the Thomas A Parran award for 1982 from the American Venereal Diseases Association. It is particularly pleasing that a British physician who has accomplished much in the promotion of the specialty, both nationally and internationally, should have been presented with this prestigious award.